

## THE COMMISSION ON WORSHIP

In conversations taking place within a recent Commission on Worship meeting, it was noted that worship often becomes just 'one more' among the many programs of the life of the local congregations. Furthermore, it was also noted that worship runs on a sort of 'auto pilot' mechanism in many local congregations. Often the pastor sets up the order of service, while musicians may select hymns; and there may be a lay reader. This structure never varies and no one else is ever invited to participate in a significant way in the planning or implementation of the worship services. In many places, more care is given to planning a seniors' outing than the Sunday morning worship service.

Out of this understanding, the Commission has begun to commit itself to the task of helping local congregations affirm the centrality of worship in their lives - in deed and word. Worship is not just one more thing that the church does. It is the central thing, the 'tie that binds', the core of our lives as a faith community. Jesus said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.' (Matthew 22: 37b-38) He was talking about worship; it is the first and great commandment. It is the primary duty of Christians. Worship of God is that which makes the church more than just another civic organization. Its importance and centrality demands that it be handled with our best care and planning.

To that end the Commission has begun to focus its work around the idea of 'Best Practices'. We are working with the Clergy Orders officers to secure the services of a person from the general church to do instruction at a clergy gathering on the processes and procedures coming out of This Holy Mystery, a study of Holy Communion.

The Commission maintains a grant process to provide funds to congregations and organizations to assist in paying for worship related training events. We maintain a speakers bureau to provide a list of available speakers for training events. We maintain an inventory of all conference owned worship related items. We have begun work on Nuts and Bolts III, which will treat all things in worship that are musically related. We are completing work on a worship DVD that visually demonstrates the information in Nuts and Bolts I. And we are working with the Conference Board of Global Ministries to develop a shared five session training event that blends worship and missions. Further, we are promoting the use of an ecumenical Baptismal certificate and the development of a greater resource presence on our conference web site. All of this is to promote and foster better planning and implementation of worship in the variety of settings in the local church that we United Methodist have for worship.

In line with our promotion of the idea of 'Best Practices', we are promoting the use of all the denominational resources available to us to enhance our Worship services: The Book of Worship, the variety of hymnals, the general church web site (<http://www.gbod.org/worship>), and the newly re-worked guide book on worship. This last resource has gone through a major re-working for this new quadrennium. It moves from being a source for a worship committee to a resource for a planning team.

Lastly, we continue to work with the bishop and the designated liturgist(s) in the preparation and implementation of this conference's worship during annual conference. We are content in our roles as vergers and altar guild, working behind the scenes. Our prayer is that we help things run a bit more smoothly and less hectically for the bishop, our liturgists, and the worshippers.

Respectfully submitted,

*The Reverend Gary D. Phillips, Chair*